

Message Text

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SUBJECT: ANNUAL CONFERENCE NATO INFORMATION OFFICIALS
(CONIO)

REF: USNATO 08905

1. IN RESPONSE TO NATIS DIRECTOR KOREN'SREQUEST (PARA-
GRAPH 3A OF REFTTEL), MISSION MAY WISH TO SUBMIT FOLLOWING
SUMMARY OF COMMENTS MADE AT CONIO LAST WEEK BY USREP CON-
CERNING US PUBLIC OPINION.

2. ON BASIS OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL PUBLIC OPINION SURVEYS
DURING PAST YEAR AND EARLIER, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE POSI-
TIVE TREND SINCE 1974 OF PUBLIC SUPPORT IN US FOR OUR
ALLIANCES IN GENERAL AND ATLANTIC ALLIANCE IN PARTICULAR
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HAS CONTINUED IN 1977. ABOUT HALF OF THE RESPONDING
PUBLIC EXPRESSES SATISFACTION WITH THE PRESENT STATE OF
OUR RELATIONS WITH WESTERN EUROPEAN ALLIES, RELATIONS PER-
CEIVED AS CLOSE AND IMPORTANT TO US; MOST OF THE OTHERS,
BY THREE TO ONE, WANT CLOSER, NOT LOOSER TIES.

3. "STRENGTHENING MILITARY SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS" WITH

OUR NATO ALLIES IS FAVORED BY SOLID 63-19 PERCENT MAJORITY.
ABOUT HALF OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC ASSERTS WILLINGNESS

SPECIFICALLY TO PARTICIPATE IN RESISTING AN INVASION OF
WESTERN EUROPE, WITH FEWER THAN ONE-THIRD OPPOSED (AGAIN,
INDICATING A TREND OF RISING SUPPORT SINCE 1974); AMONG
LEADERSHIP GROUPS, INCLUDING THE BEST EDUCATED, THE ARRI
AFFIRMATIVE RESPONSE IS MUCH LARGER: 77 PERCENT TO 14
PERCENT.

4. SUPPORT FOR DEFENSE SPENDING HAS STRENGTHENED.
WHILE THE LARGEST GROUP, ABOUT 40 PERCENT, FEELS DEFENSE
SPENDING IS AT ABOUT THE RIGHT LEVEL NOW, THERE IS MORE
SUPPORT FOR INCREASING THE DEFENSE BUDGET THAN FOR CUTTING
IT -- A DRAMATIC CHANGE OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS. AT THE
SAME TIME, TWO-THIRDS OF THE PUBLIC ATTACHES THE HIGHEST
PRIORITY TO CONTROLLING THE NUCLEAR ARMS RACE, THROUGH A
SALT AGREEMENT AND OTHER MEASURES TO LIMIT NUCLEAR PRO-
LIFERATION.

5. DESPITE SKEPTICISM EXPRESSED BY THE MAJORITY CONCERN-
ING SOVIET TRUSTWORTHINESS IN LIVING UP TO ITS AGREEMENTS,
POLLS SHOW SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASED SUPPORT IN THE PAST
YEAR FOR EFFORTS TO FIND "AREAS OF AGREEMENT AND COOPERA-
TION" WITH THE SOVIET UNION -- UP FROM 59 TO 75 PERCENT.

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6. IN GENERAL, OPINION SURVEYS SUGGEST THAT SUPPORT FOR
"GO-IT-ALONE" DEFENSE AND FOREIGN POLICIES CONTINUES TO
DECLINE, WHILE RECOGNITION OF OUR INTERDEPENDENCE WITH
OTHER COUNTRIES -- INDICATED IN THEIR RESPONSES TO POLL
QUESTIONS BY A MAJORITY OF AROUND TWO-THIRDS OF THOSE
INTERVIEWED -- CONTINUES TO INCREASE. VANCE

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